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It's been a few months since my annual pilgrimage to the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), which has allowed me time to reflect on those technologies I was initially impressed with and their possible impact on you and your firms. CES is the largest electronics show in the world and is held every January in Las Vegas to preview the latest consumer electronics that eventually filter into the business world and into tax and accounting firms. Here is my insight on the most thought-provoking tools and techs, as well as those that could be disruptive to the way all of us live and work in the near future.

**WIRELESS RECHARGING:** The transition to mobile devices where accountants can work from any place and at any time (desired) has benefitted the profession, but it has also led to the issue of needing to have multiple power cords at the office and at home to keep all the batteries charged. While iGo ([www.igo.com](http://www.igo.com)) has had adapters with multiple tips to connect any device, most of us still have multiple cords intermingled on and under our desks plugging into a power adapter as well as bundled in our computer bags.

Companies such as PowerMat ([www.powermat.com](http://www.powermat.com)) and WiPower ([www.wipower.com](http://www.wipower.com)) were showing solutions at CES that use inductive technology to charge your smartphone by simply laying it on the mat. Imagine having a laptop, scanner, phone, camera, etc. on your desk that were on and charging, but there were no cables anywhere in sight. These pads can even be placed on your nightstand or be built into

car dashboards so that your smartphone is charging as you drive to a client

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touted the world's first hybrid laptop called the U1 that looked and worked like a traditional tablet PC, but the screen could be disconnected to work like a Netbook/Slate with its own integrated processor and connectivity.

The roll out of Windows 7, which supports touch screens, may change the way tax and accounting professionals look at tablet PCs since so many users have become familiar with touch capabilities through the use of their smartphones. CES vendors took touch to the extreme with displays and formats as large as your conference room table. Microsoft ([www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)) expanded ways to use its "Surface" table by adding games and applications, Intel ([www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com)) rolled out their InfoScape "cube," which was two panels over six feet tall that enabled you to rotate images as if they were a globe, and Kodak ([www.kodak.com](http://www.kodak.com)) created a "digital river" of images with attached data flowing down a 30-foot display where attendees could interact with objects as they flowed by. All these technologies could eventually converge to replace our desktops with touch capability so we can meet with clients and effectively work with digital images of tax returns or other client documents in a very secure format (and without the paper).

**eREADERS:** Speaking of eliminating paper, Amazon's Kindle ([www.amazon.com/kindle](http://www.amazon.com/kindle)),

The Sony Reader ([www.sonystyle.com](http://www.sonystyle.com))

and the Nook by Barnes and Noble ([www.BarnesandNoble.com/nook](http://www.BarnesandNoble.com/nook))

have paved the way for a new industry of electronic readers that are changing how digital content is being delivered. While most magazine publishers think in terms of "issues," most people think in terms of "searching for types of content," which people can access from the connected eReaders

at their convenience. There were so many innovations in this area that CES actually

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being very familiar with this technology and wondering why the firm keeps any physical content at all!

**VIDEO CALLING:** Many of today's laptops come with integrated webcams, and home users have been using personal webcams such as the Microsoft LifeCam ([www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)) and Logitech QuickCam ([www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)) on home desktops with free services such as Skype ([www.Skype.com](http://www.Skype.com)) or Oovoo ([www.oovoo.com](http://www.oovoo.com)).

We expect this technology to creep into tax and accounting firms in the near future, particularly since it is easy to set up on individual workstations or the larger display screens that many firms have put in their conference rooms. Intel announced its WiDi (Wireless Display) system ([www.intel.com/consumer/products/technology/wirelessdisplay.htm](http://www.intel.com/consumer/products/technology/wirelessdisplay.htm)) at CES that can project laptop screens to the display, which they expected to be available this year. And a number of electronics manufacturers were integrating Skype into their large screen displays so you can do video calling in your family room at home.

**IPTV:** Integration of TVs and the Internet was bound to happen, creating the IPTV, which will become the natural extension of your workstation or smartphone to access digital data. This means that you can check your email at the office, on the phone during your commute home, and while you are watching TV at night because the data will be accessible wherever you want. This was referred to as PCDC (Personal Computer Digital Content), which would include the tools for this data to be custom formatted for whatever size screen you are using. Think about reviewing a tax return on your wide screen HD TV!

IPTV could be one of the most disruptive to the consumer electronics industry

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dramatically in the next few years as 3D takes off. While it started slow with movies such as this year's "Avatar" blockbuster, and the creation of ESPN's 3D sports channel in the near future, the real driver will be the three-dimensional gaming arena that will push the technology towards common adoption. Intel touted its new i5 ([www.intel.com/corei5](http://www.intel.com/corei5)) and i7 ([www.intel.com/i7](http://www.intel.com/i7)) chips at CES, which were based on chip technology tested by DreamWorks to develop the "Shrek" movies and are now available on home PCs. One of the engineers showed how they had connected two consumer HD video cameras to create 3D "home movies," so this transition is already driving costs lower. Let's face it, three-dimensional paper is a more "natural" way of looking at things, which is why some people have a hard time transitioning to work on a screen. However, 3D HD could potentially change how we review audit reports or tax returns in a digital format that is not only more secure, but that can be backed up and viewed anywhere and at any time the users wants to, which are some of the biggest limitations of paper.

**SOLUTIONS ON A CHIP (SOC):** Finally, there has been a boutique industry of vendors creating custom computer chips for specific testing or processing functions, but availability has been priced out of most markets. This is changing rapidly as production processes have improved to the point where multiple chips doing unique functions can be quickly designed and consolidated. This technology is not accounting-specific but promises to revolutionize the medical testing (eldercare) industry as a single diagnostic chip will have the capability to test for eight or more specific diseases and provide immediate results for a fraction of the current cost for any one test ... and will dramatically change how patients manage their own health. This technology is, in effect,

a testing lab in a box with near immediate results that could revolutionize

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